

# MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society

# REPORT

Report #38, July-August 1981

## Focus on the Minister's Spouse

### From Minister to Pastor's Wife to Minister: A Story of Change

Little did I realize, two and a half years ago, that marriage vows would alter my status as a pastor. Ignorantly, I had expected that I could continue to be seen as a minister in the Mennonite church with a change in marital status only. But I was now seen first as a pastor's wife, second as a mother of four delightful girls, and third as a part-time pastor. Strange, I thought, that my three years of seminary training and four years of pastoral experience were given so little recognition. I heard, "Isn't it nice that Gerald has found such a capable wife"; "We are so happy he found a wife who has been trained to be a pastor's wife"; "Now he has someone who can help him with his ministry."

My decision to leave the ministry for a year or two to acclimatize myself to a family and allow energy for normal adjustment was a good one. Unfortunately, however, this decision confirmed to a closely-observing community their expectation that I would be the ideal pastor's wife; I was seen primarily as a wife, and was affirmed as a mother.

But my anger increased. What about the congregation I was committed to—was my ministry now ended? Was I now expected to be only a support to my minister-husband? No! The choice, however, had to be mine, and the task of teaching a traditional community, I discovered, is not easy. (My experience needs to be seen in the context of the broader Mennonite community and in no way reflects any particular local congregation.)

I was not prepared for the depression which seized me. I did not anticipate an episode of intense anger directed at the religious environment which seemed to be placing me in a box. Who was I? What would I do with the external pressures which threatened to imprison me?

The quest for a new identity has only begun for me—to establish an understanding that a pastor's wife may indeed be herself in whatever role she chooses. I continue to discover the importance of reaffirming for myself God's call to ministry. I likewise recognize the

necessity of teaching by example that not all pastor's spouses will choose to fit into the traditional role which enslaves those who are not suited to that yoke.

Although my story may be unique in terms of circumstances surrounding my marriage, nonetheless the challenge of discovering an identity as a minister's spouse is common. Many women, and recently a few men, find themselves in a marriage where the spouse's response to God's call to ministry places them where they are likewise committed to the task. In all fairness, let me hasten to affirm the spouses who choose to be vocationally supportive to their pastor husband or wife. If this choice brings fulfillment, they have—by all means—God's blessing and our affirmation. Frequently, however, pastors' spouses are among the "walking wounded."

This *Report* explores what is happening in our parsonages. Has the pastor's spouse been given the freedom to be the person God intended? The articles that follow include a response to a book on the subject at hand, interviews with five women who have come to understand who they are as ministers' spouses, an interview with a minister's spouse whose wife is the pastor, an experience in a support group, and how one couple has worked at relationship wherein both have responded to a call to ministry.

Hopefully, this *Report* will serve as a springboard for further dialogue. The approach throughout is subjective. The articles touch where it hurts. Your responses are invited. You are also encouraged to check locally for the possibility of forming support groups.

My experience has been difficult—to boldly but with fear and struggle push aside the pressure of traditional role expectations as a pastor's wife and to seek a separate identity. A current point of growth for me is involvement in a Clinical Pastoral Education program which reaffirms my being chosen by God to minister to my fullest potential as well as be a devoted wife and mother to five persons whom I love very much.—*Martha Smith Good*

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*The author is a member of the Mennonite Central Committee's Task Force on Women in Church and Society, and lives in New Hamburg, Ontario.*

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*The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.*

## Interviewing Five Pastors' Wives

by Sue Clemmer Steiner

Pastors' wives are experiencing increasing freedom to be "regular active members" of their churches. There is not one set role for a pastor's wife, but many possible choices. Much depends on the woman's own personality and stage of life—and on the nature and needs of the congregation in question.

Yet within this picture of greater freedom, there are areas of struggle and tension which most pastors' wives experience. In other words, the problems which we all face as women tend to focus in certain ways for ministers' wives. There are various ways of coping, but no one solution.

What follows is a composite picture. Every attempt has been made to maintain anonymity. The quotes are reconstructions, sometimes incorporating the view of more than one person.

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*"You always wonder how you measure up with the one before you."*

A pastor's wife often finds it freeing to make certain things clear at the outset, such as: "I will not host all the visiting speakers," or "I will not teach children's Sunday school," or "I will not do all the WMSC devotionals."

The fear is that a new congregation will expect her to be like her predecessor who may have had, for instance, a policy of entertaining everybody in the church once a year. It's not that congregations have an unalterable view of how the pastor's wife ought to hook in; it's just that they work from what they're used to.

All the women in my survey married with the knowledge that they would be in "church work" of some sort; the decision for it to be congregational ministry was made together with the spouse. For some, the scenario went like this: "When we were dating, I knew John wanted to be a minister, and I thought, 'No, no way!' But finally, what could I do? I loved him. So I decided to take him as my husband first, and worry about the rest later."

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*"Is this my home or the church's?"*

Freedom for many ministers' wives comes when they move out of the parsonage into a home which they've bought (or rented) themselves. "One fall I just decided, 'I'm going out and buy us a house,' and I did it!"

With your own house, the question of having Sunday school in the living room just doesn't come up. There is also more freedom to decorate and to express your family's lifestyle.

Marjorie's home, though, still serves as the de facto church office, and she is the de facto church secretary. All the counseling is done in her living room and she is a part of some of it. She knows what is going on in the church on a day-to-day basis, and likes that. But as her family grows older, this arrangement becomes more and more disruptive of family life.

In Betty's case, some of the marriage and family counseling is done in her home—by choice. The setting seems right, and it means she can be involved while still keeping an ear out for the children.

*"Children help make you seem like everybody else."*

Young children are something of a "protection" for pastors' wives. "All the other young mothers say no to things, so I can too." Children also help humanize a pastoral couple. "People can see that our family is far from perfect!"

Besides, babies are an asset in visiting the elderly. And, as daughters get older, they may function as "companions" for Mother if Dad is gone a lot.

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*"It's just fortunate I can drive."*

A perennial issue for ministers' wives is "He's never home," or "He's never home when other husbands are."

Some pastors make it a practice to come home at mealtime. Others try hard to take a regular day off, but that so easily gets eaten up in routine maintenance chores. It helps when congregations recognize the problem and urge the pastor to arrange for "family time." A woman very involved in her husband's ministry says: "I mind the busyness, but at least I'm in it too."

Still, there is a sense of being out of sync with the rest of the world: "Sundays are a washout...people don't know how much it takes out of him to preach one hour and then teach the next, every Sunday."

Deborah speaks of the ultimate in quiet rebellion like this: "One time we actually went to a movie on a Sunday night when there was a service at church....We really needed that."

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*"I have a place to go where I'm known on my own."*

Two of the women took the approach that "his work is our work; helping Leroy with congregational duties is my job; we decided to work at it together." But—even if a woman likes it that way—the question of being an unpaid assistant pastor can creep in. "I'm learning," says one. "Next time around we would negotiate for it."

For women who do not take that approach and who do not have young children, a significant full or part-time job or rewarding hobby are often essential to survival. Yet the job or hobby needs to have time flexibility, "so I can go to the weddings."

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*"Did they really consider the number of children we have?"*

Low pay is not on the top rung of difficulties, but can still cause a pinch, especially in rural congregations. Yet that kind of congregation also has informal ways of supplementing a pastor's income. "It means living on faith. But we never tell the kids, 'We can't afford this,' but rather, 'We don't need it.' "

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*"If I were on council, we would be too much of a power bloc."*

While they have freedom to take or reject congregational jobs in line with personal interests and gifts, the women surveyed would *not* feel comfortable holding a position on church council.

With that exception, some wives feel they can plug right in and make significant changes in the church

program on their own. Others feel that changes need to be made, but have no way to express it: "My husband is sensitive about me making my views felt. People won't know if it's him or me."

Still others look at it philosophically. "At least I have a pipeline to somebody on council. Not everybody has that."

Wives react differently to participation in the "ceremonial" aspects of the pastor's job (weddings, funerals, and private celebrations to mark milestones in members' business or personal lives). Edith finds it difficult to go to "functions where I'm not comfortable with the lifestyle." Linda dislikes gatherings where she's not known: "So I stand beside my husband and smile sweetly and pretend he's a businessman and these are his associates."

*"I don't have a community. I don't have a pastor."*

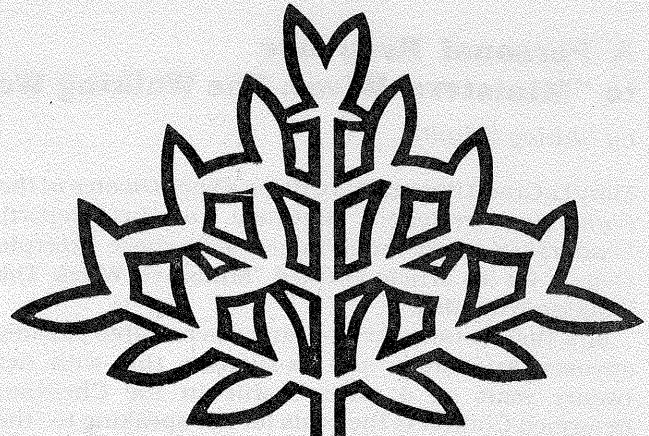
The pastor's wife is increasingly being urged to "be a regular member of the group," but when it comes down to it she usually can't. She and her husband are still on a pedestal; the congregation may have trouble understanding people "who dedicate their lives to the church."

In close-knit churches, it may be difficult for a pastor's wife to have "intimate friends" in the group; contacts with other pastors and spouses are very significant. Sometimes a pastor has a built-in support group with lay leaders of the congregation and/or other pastoral staff. But such a support group is probably not available to his spouse.

What is worse, a pastor's wife may not be sure when she has a husband and when (if at all) she has a pastor. A conference minister who makes himself available as a pastor to both pastors and their spouses is a real help here.

*"I hurt so badly for him...."*

The very worst situation for a pastor's spouse comes at those times when he is involved in a conflict situation in the church—especially if he is publicly criticized. Because the wife is not directly involved in



the situation, there are no available processes for working through the hurt.

"He dumps on me, but I have nowhere to go with it."

"I know about it, and feel all the hurt, but have no way to get rid of it."

"It's hard to act the same toward the people involved."

"I want to protect him, like a mother hen, but there's nothing I can do. I think, this can't be! That's my husband they're criticizing."

Often the wife is still struggling after the husband has come to a resolution. Again, having an understanding conference minister helps. "It also helps if during a difficult time people in the congregation come and express appreciation for you."

If the wife is very involved in ministry, it may be possible to take a direct approach that involves her too. "We call people in and say, 'Let's discuss it.' 'Yes,' we tell them, 'it's o.k. to do this.'"

Other wives say, "You have to pray about it, and just forgive the people who caused the hurts." Or, "I read my Bible and pray and then journal it out. I just get all my feelings down."

But sometimes, the hurt just goes on....

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*Sue Clemmer Steiner, from Waterloo, Ontario, is a student at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries.*

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*I have...a dream about equal opportunities for Mennonite women. I have a dream that some day my three daughters and two sons will be a part of a church that will not judge them on the basis of the shape of their bodies nor on the number of X and Y chromosomes, but on the basis of their commitment to Jesus Christ. I have a dream that some day our church and its institutions will both recognize and seek leaders on the basis of God-given gifts rather than on the basis of gender. I have a dream that some day the Mennonite Church will both believe and begin to live the truth which Paul gave us when he wrote, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."—Robert Hartzler*

## A Personal Response to "Ministers' Wives: The Walking Wounded"

by Shirley Schultz

Mary LaGrand Bouma has written a book *Divorce in the Parsonage* (reviewed elsewhere in this Report). *Leadership* magazine (Winter 1980) chose excerpts from it for an article entitled "Ministers' Wives: The Walking Wounded."

Mrs. Bouma talked with nearly two hundred pastors, spouses, ex-pastors, and ex-spouses; this with her twenty years as a pastor's wife in the Christian Reformed Church is the basis for her speaking to "the perils of pastoral ministry and the preventative measures that can be taken to avoid dissolved relationships and crushed lives."

Hurts appear, she says, in the areas of stereotyping the minister's wife, loneliness, money problems, frequent moves, use of the parsonage, and use of the telephone. She makes seven suggestions for remedy, directed at married male pastors: let your wife try her wings; protect her from "the system"; consider a double-team ministry; encourage her to activate her intellect; share child-rearing responsibilities; act responsibly and with discretion in pastoral counseling; and be specific in telling your wife how much you appreciate her.

My reaction to the article title was a feeling of martyrdom. I felt an immediate need to read it, because the pain in those words left me wondering who was walking wounded, doing what to whom.

It is twenty-two years ago that I married a clergyman. During our engagement (he was already ordained) I read numerous books in order to prepare myself "to fit the role just right!" Some suggestions I received certainly fit the stereotype about which Mrs. Bouma shares so deeply.

At that point in my life I had many personal interests which "fit the books." My teaching career blended well into the Christian education department; I enjoyed entertaining; I found it stimulating to be around people. Thus it was easy to use my skills naturally in the church. I became intensely involved in my husband's ministry and in the life of the congregation, and it felt right and good. Who I was expected to be and the duties I was expected to perform were not discussed. There may have been some non-verbal expectations from church members which reinforced those I placed on myself. One area was verbalized, but only by a few people: what I was expected to wear. This made me very angry, and I did a good job of repressing those feelings over the years. I have since spent time working on them, and have found release.

Beginning in the 1970s, I started to get in touch with my past and began working on "Who I am" and "Who I want to be." Though painful, the timing was right. Before our next pastorate I was ready to take some personal responsibility to negotiate with the pastoral search committee and share with the congregation some of my interests and concerns. I requested and was granted the freedom to be who I am and use my gifts in both church and community just like any other church

member. I felt deeply respected. It was a positive step in clarifying expectations and was a preventative in causing future hurt feelings.

This new freedom was gratifying and confining—confining in that I could no more depend on a stereotype to help me decide my involvements or non-involvements. I had to continually search out who I was and who I wanted to be! Blaming other people for what I got stuck with was no longer an option. I am learning what it means to take personal responsibility for where I'm at with myself, with others, and with God. When I feel safe as to who I am, being introduced as "the pastor's wife" no longer threatens me.

Mrs. Bouma states that "minister's wives usually have no one with whom they can let their hair down." I agree that having a confidante is a crucial part of feeling support, acceptance, and belonging. In our beginning years, my husband and I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with another novice couple serving in the same area. It didn't take long for us to discover that we could be a support system to each other, both as couples and as individuals. (This was long before "small groups" were ever introduced!) Over several years we cried, laughed, prayed, traveled, and worked together. We affirmed each other's strengths and weaknesses. It was best for us to choose someone outside our immediate congregations for such close friendship.

Since then I have also experienced being one of eight to ten people in Caring and Sharing groups within the congregation. Following a period of trust development and commitment to each other regarding confidences, I have again experienced beautiful relationships of personal acceptance, respect, and growth. I feel it is important to have a clear verbal and written understanding for such groups so as to work toward open sharing.

On the subject of moving, fortunately our denomination does not (on the average) encourage the pastor to move every three to four years. I would find this extremely difficult; hellos and goodbyes are not easy for me. I have discovered that I need someone outside of my immediate family to help me sort out my feelings so that I can make necessary adjustments to a new community and church. A professional counselor has been this supportive person to me after a long distance move.

Circumstances, maturity level, and self-awareness keep changing; I am glad I have not locked myself into one format when needing and seeking help. God certainly has provided the people and resources necessary for me, even though it hasn't always been easy to admit that I need help.

Several other areas of possible contention mentioned by Mrs. Bouma are family time, money, parsonage living, and use of the telephone. I can recall feeling so overwhelmed by the work load that both my husband and I felt sure that God meant for us to work

seven days a week! Over the years, however, we have become very much aware that *we are not indispensable*. The first realization of this was hard on our pride! Our denomination has taken a positive step in encouraging pastors to make known to the congregation which day of the week is "time off."

Those beginning years when "we were kept poor" have been another agenda item where I have needed outside help. Churches have come a long way in improving the financial lot of the pastor and family. My deepest thanks go to the many lay persons who have worked hard on this. I now struggle with the question of what I can live without. I dare not allow other people's extravagance to dictate what I want or what I think I need!

Parsonage living presents problems for many families. Unfortunate happenings can often be prevented if questions are cleared during negotiation and made public to the congregation prior to moving in. I can only speak positively of our experience; we discussed many details of parsonage living beforehand.

Then there's the telephone. Having our home number in the church bulletin gives permission, and we can expect some calls to reach us there. I have at times tactfully tried to keep the message brief and direct. I would rather be honest than try to sound accommodating, and underneath be frustrated.

#### **Response to the "Remedies"**

In Mrs. Bouma's suggestions for remedy, I felt a lot of heaviness and responsibility placed on the pastor to be his wife's "protector." For me this is too easy an out—as if I'm being given permission to be a blamer rather than a responsible adult. In a healthy husband-wife relationship, a key factor is open communication. This means

that they can and will respect each other's involvements or non-involvements. Open communication also makes pastor and spouse able to experience both independence in some interests and doing other things as a team. They will be able to affirm each other's need for help outside of the relationship, particularly in crisis situations, and will be able to verbalize support in times of failure as well as achievement.

An open relationship respects "Who I am" and "Who I am becoming." It allows for personal change; it encourages self-worth and the growth of personal dignity. When each partner is willing to take personal responsibility to work at the marriage, in painful times and joyful times, and acknowledge God's leading them together and to their assignment, and when each learns to live with some unanswered questions, *then* they have come a long way toward wholeness.

I pray that prospective or beginning pastors' spouses will not be frightened away by Mrs. Bouma's writing. In the Christian brother and sisterhood we very much need each other. We need to search out support systems and give ourselves permission to be human, to sometimes fail, but also to enjoy what we're doing and whom we are married to!

Some years ago, as I was working at defining "Who I am," I suddenly became aware that many of my involvements in the church reflect my interests and gifts and were not necessarily dependent on being the pastor's wife!

*Shirley Schultz has been a member of a clergy family for many years. Mother of three, she is now also a school teacher.*

## **Interview with Maurice Miller, A Pastor's Spouse**

by Jan Lugibihl

Marilyn and Maurice Miller have been married for twenty-three years. They are the parents of three teenage children. Marilyn was ordained six years ago and, since that time, has been a co-pastor of the Arvada Mennonite Church. Maurice is a park planner with the National Park Service.

JL: You said there have been some changes in your life since Marilyn became a pastor. Can you outline some of those?

MM: I was raised in a Mennonite family where the woman worked in the home and the man worked outside. One of the reasons I married Marilyn is that she's an independent thinker. When we moved to Denver she started graduate school with the idea that she was going to improve herself. After that, it was a gradual change where I assumed more of the role at home. I started thinking more about Marilyn's well-being and her personhood. We started communicating more. I got more involved with her growth. I began to be more concerned about whether we were giving the

children enough time and began to reflect on whether I should be doing more nurturing at home.

JL: Can you say something about positives and negatives of being a pastor's spouse?

MM: One of the positives is that I can be more relaxed. I don't have to be the sole breadwinner. I became more sensitive to the kids' needs and Marilyn's needs. Marilyn's becoming a professional woman has also helped me grow in dealing with women at work as peers on a professional basis. The tensions are around time. Time with Marilyn and anxious feelings when there's no one at home with our teenagers. I think presence of a parent is very important for them. There was also a little bit of jealousy—she is not at home all of the time now, but is out in the world with all kinds of people. The real tension is time, though. We both have to give a little bit more on our schedules. Another positive is that, because of her training, we talk more about feelings. When she tells me about what she's learned at school

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## Growth Groups for Ministers' Wives

by Sara M. Regier

Ministers' wives are not a homogeneous group of women even though they are all married to ministers. Some of the needs and problems of ministers' wives had been discussed by the ministerial committee of the Western District Conference (of the General Conference Mennonite Church). Out of these discussions grew the idea of organizing a support group to minister to the specific needs of ministers' wives.

The changes and stresses affecting women in our society also affect the minister's wife. Inflation and a limited budget, managing a household, the demands of children and parenting, maintaining a career, and community activities—these are all pressures that are unique to her role as a minister's wife. She shares to some degree with her husband a sense of call to minister to the needs of the congregation that has called them. There are satisfactions and joys in this joint call, but there are also pressures, role expectations, and guilt feelings that come with such a position.

Because of the confidentiality she needs to maintain in the congregation it is hard to find close supportive friends with whom she can openly share her own personal problems and needs. Tension also comes from "voting on the pastor" or pastoral evaluation. The minister's wife can feel helpless, not in control of her

own future, dehumanized or isolated, and alone whenever a pastoral evaluation centers only on the congregation's judgment of the minister's performance. Whether the minister and his wife decide to leave a church "when we're ahead" or are asked to move to another church it can be disruptive to family and personal life. Maintaining a career is difficult because she can not be sure how long her family will stay in one place.

### How We Did It

Working through Growth Associates of Prairie View Mental Health Center, two facilitators were chosen for the Growth Group: Francis Campbell, a staff psychiatrist and myself, a lay person with training in Family and Child Development and previous experience as a growth group facilitator. We shared the hope that this could be an intimate and supportive group where personal strengths, problems, and inadequacies could be discussed in a non-judgmental way that could affirm traditional roles for some women as well as affirming change, risk, and new roles for others.

In a casual atmosphere with snacks and something to drink we opened each two hour session by introducing a specific topic for discussion. Each person in this group of twelve was then given uninterrupted time

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and in her job, that improves our relationship and makes me a better husband. And I have grown in my theological, Christian point of view.

JL: Has being married to a pastor changed the way you relate to the church?

MM: Before we came here, I felt that I took more of a leadership role, that it was my task to work in leadership areas in the church. Now I can be what I want to be—if I don't want to put effort in, people allow me to do that. Because of my past experience in work relationships, I think that, because Marilyn is a paid staff person, it is more comfortable for me not being on church boards but rather working on ad hoc committees. I don't have a great urge to match Marilyn's church leadership capabilities. She has the training to do that. Taking a supportive role is better for me. That feeling, again, comes from self-worth I experience from my own career and relationship to Marilyn, not from any signals I feel the congregation is giving to me.

JL: Do you think there are different expectations of you than a female pastor's spouse?

MM: I don't think there is too much difference in Arvada. If Marilyn were the sole pastor in another church there might be some feeling that, well, "because he's a man he won't be able to do some of the things our last pastor's wife did," but I don't know.

JL: If conflicts arise around time commitments on your jobs, how do you prioritize?

MM:L I don't have many night meetings, so I'm usually home in the evenings. When I travel I can adjust my schedules because I have flexibility in my job. If something happens to one of the kids at school usually either Marilyn or I can arrange to take time off to take care of it. Ten years ago I would have been more upset about doing that, but now I am more flexible in my own mind and in my job. If one of us were offered a job somewhere else we would have to talk a lot about it and work it through. We believe God has a purpose for our lives as individuals and as a couple, and we want to continue to work at it and do God's will.

JL: Are there other things you'd like to say?

MM: I think I've been able to cope with Marilyn's career development. I'm not threatened by her becoming professionally important. I feel comfortable as a person and feel competent in my work, thus there have been few feelings of competition or threat. I don't think women have been allowed to express their personhood in theology, so I'm very proud of Marilyn and what she's done. The bottom line is that every one is trying to be a person, and when we explore our personhood, male and female needs are about the same physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Love is helping the other person to meet those needs and to become what God intended him or her to be.

*Jan Lugibihl is a member of Arvada (Colorado) Mennonite Church.*

to "give testimony" to experiences and feelings from her own life. The following topics were discussed: Who am I apart from my job, my marital status, and my family (Gulp, what's left!); My mother and other significant women in my life; My life plan, using adult life cycle guidelines as a model; Sexuality; Learning to give and receive affirmation.

Confidentiality and regular attendance were expected. Participants were given the freedom to not share or to cut off dialogue if it became too painful. Following the "testimonies" the discussion focused on concepts and personal feelings. Value judgments, advice-giving, and negative connotations of women's roles were discouraged.

"I found this group so refreshing because we never 'wallowed'" was one woman's comment. "This is the first time I've been in a group where everyone nods her head and really understands what I'm feeling when I say something" was another woman's expression of well-being within the group. Books on the discussion topic as well as short hand-outs were available each week to help each participant focus on her own feelings and articulate them.

As each woman shared her life and feelings with the group from week to week, a spirit of trust and understanding developed. It was surprising that most of the women did not know each other well even though they live close together and their husbands serve neighboring churches. A spirit of acceptance and affirmation helped each person to clarify issues in her own life, become less fearful of being assertive, and make changes in her personal life as well as with regard to relationships with members of the congregation.

This was a beginning—a pilot project. The evaluation and subsequent dialogue suggest that a continuing program of growth and support for ministers' wives would be helpful. Participants expressed a need for a continuing structure of some sort to maintain this intimacy and support and deal with ongoing tensions and issues. Some wished that husbands could also be included because an assertive and growing lifestyle for a woman often means adjustments and changes for the whole family. Hopefully this program can help ministers' wives to better use the unique talents and

gifts that they have to offer in an atmosphere of openness and acceptance, both in their own marriage and family and in the congregation and community where they choose to minister.

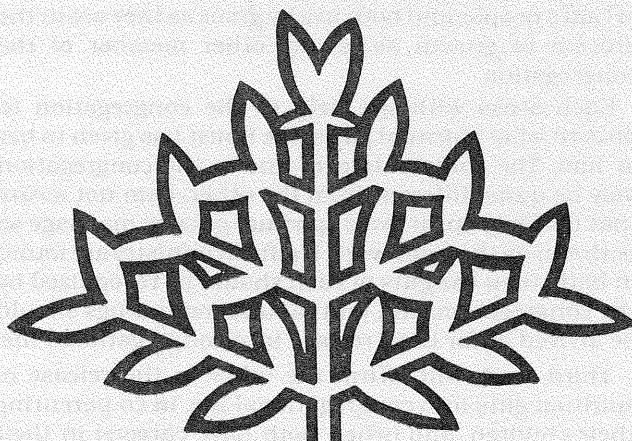
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*Sara M. Regier is a missionary candidate to Botswana, and currently on the ministerial team of Faith Mennonite Church, Newton, Kansas.*

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*During her thirty-six years as a pastor's wife, Charlcie Ogle had only one goal—to support the efforts of her husband, the Rev. Edwin C. Ogle. She knew how to calm storms, iron shirts, stretch money. Quite suddenly Edwin succumbed to a stroke. Although well-provided for and the mother of three grown sons, Charlcie would not settle for an idle widowhood. She got a job in a store, but missed being a pastor's wife. One day, she leafed through a Church of God yearbook and was amazed at how many congregations were without pastors. "Could it be possible," she thought, "that I might pastor one of them?" There were no barriers against women preaching in her denomination, and besides teaching a Sunday school class she had had plenty of experience in assisting Edwin. And she had access to all of his old sermon notes. On the other hand, she had never gone to college, and the thought of preaching a sermon sent chills down her spine.*

*She heard that a church of her denomination in Eureka, Kansas, needed a pastor. She learned that the flock had been divided and that attendance had shrunk to fewer than a dozen people. Convinced that she should take the plunge, Charlcie moved to Eureka and launched her new career. The necessary skills developed more easily than she had thought possible, and today the city of 3,700 is glad she joined their community. Charlcie keeps busy with sermons, funerals, weddings, hospital visitation, and counseling. And the tiny congregation has grown to about forty members. Recently, in ceremonies conducted by Kansas pastors, Charlcie Ogle was ordained into the ministry at the age of 69.—Charles Ludwig. Reprinted from *Grit* (22 February 1981) and used with permission of Grit Publishing Company, Williamsport, Pa. 17701. Copyright 1981.*



## Being Spouses in Leadership Roles

by Emma Richards

Joe and I have been married twenty-eight years. Years one and two, Joe was a seminary student and I a teacher. Years three to fifteen, Joe was a missionary pastor and father, and I was home manager and mother. Years sixteen to twenty-eight we have been team-mates in leadership roles.

Obviously we had many experiences of love and learning before we began sharing as partners in pastoring. We have learned how to be team-mates, not rivals. We have also learned how to lift out the best in each other. Our marriage grows richer with each passing year. We love each other.

We give each other breathing space to grow, develop, and use our discoveries. We describe each other honestly as "my enabler, my mentor, my pastor." We have grown in our Christian lives and have deep respect and confidence in the faith we see in each other. We do not experience conflict between "pulpit words" and

"home words." Each of us sees genuine faith in the other.

We enjoy our home and we work together in the tasks necessary to make it a comfortable and pleasant place to live and share with others.

Our congregation has been a key factor in our happy lives in leadership. Church members have accepted us as partners and have given us the freedom and support necessary for us to function in our assigned roles. They have treated us as co-pastors; thus it is easy to be such.

We are deeply grateful for the home, church, and educational training that we have received, enabling us to be self-confident in our tasks and in relationship to each other. We have been called to be leaders, and we don't draw back from that call.

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*Emma and Joe Richards are co-pastors of Lombard (Illinois) Mennonite Church*

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## Pastor's Spouse—What Role?

by Harold E. Bauman

It may help us men to imagine ourselves in a setting in which our wives were the pastor and we were businessmen or farmers or teachers or whatever. Would we expect to have a special role relationship to our wives, to find our meaning and fulfillment through their work, and accompany them on pastoral visitation? More to the point, we would not have a job outside the home!

There are wives who find fulfillment in functioning in the traditional role. They help their husbands—visiting homes with them, attending workshops and conferences, perhaps also doing some secretarial work. The option of identity and fulfillment apart from their husbands is not in the picture.

There are other pastor's wives who feel like the one who wrote the following letter to the editor of the *Evangelical Visitor*:

"I happen to be married to a pastor. I find that, however, incidental to who I am and to what I do. My identity is not contingent on what my husband does. In other words, I am trained for my profession, and he is trained for his. He cannot do my job, and I cannot, and will not, do his. Therefore, for myself, I find the pastor's

"I happen to be married to a pastor. I find that, however, incidental to who I am and to what I do. My identity is not contingent on what my husband does. In other words, I am trained for my profession, and he is trained for his. He cannot do my job, and I cannot, and will not, do his. Therefore, for myself, I find the 'pastor's wife' role as unacceptable as for him to be known as a 'nurse's husband.' I feel in all fairness that if a congregation...wants a team ministry, then they negotiate, contract, and pay for such. I think that 'pastor's wife' role expectations without contractual or financial recognition are unequal and therefore un-Christlike."

*Factors behind the traditional role.* What has led to the development of a "pastor's wife" role? We need to remember that for centuries women were considered

the property of men, even among the Israelites (Ex. 20:17). The wife, therefore, contributed to the husband's welfare. A second factor is that in an agrarian society, work involved the whole family. The husband headed the enterprise and the wife contributed to his work. The logic follows: shouldn't the wife help her husband when he becomes a minister by being with him in his work? A third factor involves views of "the ministry." It is a high calling and a wife should be honored to assist. The minister is to be the example of the Christian life and therefore his wife bears that same task. However, when the wife participates in the ordination but without being ordained, her personhood is subsumed into his personhood.

*Some factors to consider.* As pastor and spouse work out their relationships to deal with role expectations, where can they begin?

They begin by confessing they both are disciples of the Lord Jesus, both need to participate in the body life of God's people, and both live by grace as they are in the process of growth as is any other member of the congregation.

Each seeks with the help of the congregation to discern what spiritual gift(s) the Spirit has given to her or him. The contribution of one to the congregation may be quite different from the other. I am not aware that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts by marriage so both can do the same work. If gifts in ministry are found in both, then the gifts of each should be recognized by the congregation, and mutual understandings should be arrived at for their release into congregational life.

Third, each will affirm the other in the release of spiritual gifts into congregational life, in co-parenting their children, and (when both have careers) in their work. (Reprinted by permission from *Builder*, December 1980, pp. 18, 19.)

## Resources

"Sensitivity to the Other Half" and "Parsonage Humor" by Helen C. Coon in *Window to Mission*, June-July 1980.

"Being the Other Half" by Leann Toews in *Window to Mission*, June-July 1980.

*Coming Together; Male and Female in a Renamed Garden* by Ruthann Knechel Johansen (Brethren Press, Elgin, Ill. 1977, 151 pp. \$3.95). What sets *Coming Together* apart from other Christian feminist books is the author's meshing of female liberation with the liberation of third world peoples, or oppressed persons everywhere. To Johansen, simply being oneself—open to the needs of others—is a radical act in today's society: "genuine being is revolutionary behavior." As people allow themselves to be honest about and receptive to the emotional and physical needs of others, they will begin to see "commonalities among people rather than...barriers." Such an awakening will bring about the start of a true revolution, one which will free all people....Such a revolution of love and caring is, in the author's opinion, the vital message of Christianity.—*Sally H. Bennett in Fellowship magazine*.

*Women and the Word: Sermons*, edited by Helen Gray Crotwell (Fortress Press, 1978, 134 pp.). This paperback contains nineteen sermons by women from a variety of denominations. Among them are Karen Bloomquist (pastor of Faith American Lutheran Church, Oakland, California), Nancy Hardesty (professor at Chandler School of Theology), and Letty Russell (ordained in the United Presbyterian Church). Samples are "The Story of Transfiguration" by Cynthia Wedel and "Suffering and Hope" by Beatriz Melano Couch. The book is valuable for meditation, personal growth, new theological insight, as a resource and as acknowledgment that women not only can be affirmed as public speakers but also as theological interpreters.—*Anne Neufeld Rupp in The Mennonite*.

*Divorce in the Parsonage*. Mary LaGrand Bouma (Bethany Fellowship, 1979, 156 pp. Paper \$3.95 and \$4.20). Ms. Bouma who is a busy mother and pastor's wife shares her concern about the growing number of divorces among the clergy. She knows from experience the special stresses on a minister's family—unreasonable and ill-defined duties, low pay, numerous demands at all hours, loneliness, the constantly ringing phone, the moves, living in a home owned by the church, insufficient time for family life, and the temptations of the counseling situation.

One chapter is devoted to what makes marriage work. She exhorts seminarians and their girlfriends to choose carefully. Pastors and their wives will find suggestions to help build and enhance their marriages. Finally, she speaks to congregations about encouraging and helping the pastor and his family in their difficult role.

Ms. Bouma's insights are invaluable for those trying to balance marriage and family with the ministry. And her words to church members should inspire empathy and concrete support for the family shepherding their congregation.—*Sara Wengerd in Provident Book-finder, used by permission*.

*What's Happening to Clergy Marriages*. David & Vera Mace (Abingdon, 1980, 144 pp. Paper \$4.95 and \$5.95). Seminary faculties, pastoral search committees, church councils, missions executives, and pastor couples, please read this book! It may save you money and increase the quality of service rendered by your organization or congregation while simultaneously enhancing God's plan for human relationships. Not bad for \$4.95!

The issues raised in this book are fundamental. The quality of the pastor's marriage and family life is either a resource for or a drain upon the leadership and ministry provided to the congregation. Additionally, the image and experiences of the pastor's family life influence the calling and recruitment of future pastors.

David and Vera Mace, Quakers with a broad and rich experience in "making marriages and families more loving and creative, beginning with our own," began in 1976 to study from the outside what the relationships of clergy couples were really like. They studied the self-perceptions of clergy couples. Couples in which one partner is a pastor are struggling with marital difficulties similar to those of many marriages in our contemporary culture: dealing with feelings especially negative ones, inadequate communication, the ability to resolve conflict, little time together, role uncertainty, etc. The burden is especially heavy when these common struggles are encountered in a clergy marriage with its special demands: expectations to be models of a superhuman variety; the lack of privacy; the pastor's heavy and consuming work schedule.

Maces examine some of the situational conditions of clergy marriages (for instance, time demands, moving, roles and contractual relationships) and suggest practical changes that could be made both in the organization of the ministry and in congregation-clergy attitudes. But, Maces contend that the most serious difficulties are within the husband-wife relationship. Traditionally, for clergy couples to admit to marital problems brings negative career implications. Furthermore, to whom does the couple turn for help?

We were very fortunate. During my ministry our marriage needed help. The senior pastor and members in the congregation were very supportive. Assistance through a community pastoral counseling center was most helpful. Other colleagues need help, too. Maybe the resources are not available. Maybe opportunities are missed, or not taken:

This book helps focus the issues and the task of strengthening clergy marriages. Moreover, it is a practical and positive book.

The Maces are clear and concise writers who keep their audience firmly in mind. Their research of the literature on this subject is impressive. The list of sources is a gold-mine. But, their empirical data gathering methods are suspect. Their target population was clergy couples in the U.S. which they estimated at about 220,000 in 1980. They gathered data from a very small (321 persons) and biased (volunteers at marriage enrichment workshops primarily from

*continued on next page*

*continued from page 9*

"mainline Protestant" denominations) sample. Thus, their generalizations must be viewed with caution. Also, I tired of their unnecessary, negative, stereotyped treatment of the Roman Catholic tradition of celibacy for clergy.

Our Mennonite institutions that develop church leaders and our congregation that need them have a mutual interest in a thorough study of marriage among Mennonite clergy for the identification, prevention, and treatment of marital problems, so that God's call might be better answered. Until then, read this book.—*John K. Hershberger in Provident Bookfinder.*

## **Findings of the Fifth "Women in Ministry" Conference 27-29 March 1981, North Newton, Kansas**

At this conference we had the following objectives: to encourage each other and be encouraged; to remind ourselves of the urgency of the call to minister; to work for a greater sense of unity with all persons; to assess the current situation of women in Mennonite churches.

As Dottie Janzen led our thinking on the theme of "Whole Persons Ministering to the Whole World," she provided both stimulation and the model of her own ministry. We worshiped together around the theme of how Christ calls us, unites us, shapes us, and sends us. We listened to each other; we disagreed with each other. We became more aware of women among us who model wholeness in ministry.

As we assessed the situation of Mennonite women today, we noted that: we are generally committed rather than militant; there was less anger than at previous conferences, but still some pain; there is a desire to bring men along, not a feeling of divisiveness between men and women; there is seeking what the Bible has to say.

Strengths of this conference were: ample opportunity for inter-Mennonite interaction as General Conference, Mennonite Church, and Mennonite Brethren women were present and active in both planning and conducting the conference; there was a sense of caring for one another, and a sensitivity to differences; there was opportunity for participating denominations to caucus in order to speak of their particular issues; the hospitality was ably done and much appreciated.

Suggestions for improvement: more workshop time; encourage people to come for the entire conference; program also for people who are ready to go beyond consciousness raising; be more aware of the world-wide sisterhood, in addition to North American continent; program for persons in international ministry roles—international service volunteers, missionaries on furlough, etc.; provide facilities for private counseling; be more aware of Anabaptist theology in choice of songs;

be aware of male-oriented liturgical language in worship materials.—*Findings Committee: Barbara Reber, Muriel T. Stackley, and Elizabeth G. Yoder.*

## **news and verbs**

*Shamima*, a Bangladeshi woman, in 1979 received \$200 from Mennonite Central Committee's Saidpur Action Bag Project—this in addition to her annual income of \$140. She bought a sewing machine and is now self-supporting.

*Karen Ventura* and her office, the Mennonite Hispanic Immigration Service in Washington, D.C., have been accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals, U.S. Department of Justice, as a nonprofit organization qualified to represent immigrants in legal proceedings.

*Mary Sprunger-Froese* and *Kathleen Jennings* are the women in the group of six found guilty of "illegally entering the [Pantex weapons] plant compound in violation of federal law" at the 24 March 1981 trial in Amarillo, Tex. Sister Anne Montgomery and Molly Rush are the women in the group of eight found "guilty of burglary, criminal mischief, and conspiracy" in entering and demonstrating at General Electric's King of Prussia (Pa.) Re-entry Systems Division assembly plant.

*Sally Schreiner*, Evanson, Ill., is the new assistant director for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Program, primarily administering voluntary service units.

*Organizing and planning committees for (Mennonite World Conference) XI Strasbourg 84 include the following women: (Netherlands) Tiny Van Straten of Leidschendam, Marthje de Vries of Nuenen, Jo van Ingen Schenau-Elsen of Oegstgeest; (Germany) Helga Driedger of Weierhof, Denise Schmutz of Ludwigshafen, Anita Lichti of Schorndorf and Dora Geiser of Friedelsheim; (France) Marie Noelle Faure of Paris; (Switzerland) Margit Ramseier of Basel.*

*Frieda Myers* has been elected to the 10-member board of Mennonite Housing Aid which is constructing Brementowne Manor in Tinley Park, Ill. Brementowne Manor is a 106-unit independent living facility for persons 62 years or older.

*Myrna Burkholder, Susan Ebersole, Ardis Grosjean and Erma Martin Yost* were planners for the Second New York Arts Seminar in April.

*Miriam Sieber Lind* of Goshen, Indiana, spoke to Salford Mennonite congregation in Pennsylvania in May on the needs of developmentally disabled persons and their integration into church life.

*Joyce C. Hedrick* has recently completed a year as chaplain intern at Doylestown (Pennsylvania) Hospital for studies toward an M.Div. degree at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Last fall she was commissioned

for this ministry by her home congregation, Plains Mennonite Church. On Mother's Day she brought them the morning message: "Mothering: A Ministry of Enabling" dealing with the congregation's mothering aspects.

*Ruth Yoder*, Hesston (Kan.) College nursing instructor has begun a two-year assignment at Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti with Mennonite Central Committee.

*Diane L. MacDonald*, Denver, Colo., presented the fifth annual C. Henry Smith Lecture at Goshen and Bluffton Colleges, March. Her subject: "Menno's Rib: A Feminist Approach to Anabaptist Theology."

Mennonite Central Committee workers in service reached an all-time high of 809 in 1980. Of the 455 appointed in 1980, 51 percent were women.—MCC Workbook 1980), 226 pages, \$2.50.

*Nancy Kerr Williams* was a resource leader for a retreat for formerly married persons, held at Laurelvile Mennonite Church Center in Pennsylvania, 17-19 April.

*Erma Grove* is director of Good News Training Institute in Accra, Ghana, training leaders for African independent churches.

*Lodema Short* has completed 33 years as a teacher in Zaire under Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission.

*Dorothy Kingsley* was co-chair for the first North Central MCC Relief Sale held in West Fargo, N.D., in April.

*Naomi Reub* was one of two Mennonite Disaster Service speakers on "A Chance to Say Yes" at the annual meeting of the Nebraska State Mennonite Disaster Service in Henderson in March.

*Lois Barrett*, Elkhart, Indiana, is a new member-at-large of the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace Section.

*Florence Driedger* of Saskatchewan has given momentum in constituency education to Canadian Native Ministries.

*Beulah S. Hostetler* has received the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Membership Committee's Research grant of \$500 to study "American Fundamentalism and the Mennonites in Eastern Pennsylvania from about 1890 to 1950."

*Ruth and Allan Eitzen* were featured at The People's Place (Intercourse, Pennsylvania) Winter Cultural Series last November on the subject "How Art Has Shaped Our Lives."

*Lois Miller*, head of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, has announced a no-strings-

attached fund for leadership training in several African countries. One million of the \$7 million fund will come from Africa and six million from United States and Europe.

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*The Franconia Conference (MC)* has adopted a "Summary Statement on the Woman's Head Covering" by majority vote. It states: "We affirm those congregations and individuals whose understandings of I Corinthians 11:2-16 lead the sisters to have long hair and to wear a veiling in worship or at other times as a symbol of their understanding of the differing functions of men and women, and we also respect those congregations and individuals who have come to other understandings of the meaning and application of I Corinthians 11:2-16. We affirm congregational decision in this matter, made in light of their understandings of scripture, diligent study and seeking of God's direction for them. Where differing understandings and practices bring tension to congregations regarding this issue, we encourage the use of the resources of the Leadership Commission which are available to assist congregations in this study." The Franconia Conference has some 6,000 members in churches in Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Jersey and New York.

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*Nestle* has been pouring thousands of dollars into its anti-boycott campaign and claiming a diminishing of protest letters (against its pushing infant formula where breastfeeding is far superior). The company's address is 100 Bloomingdale Road, White Plains, N.Y. 10603. For international Nestle memorandum and additional information on the boycott, write INFAC, 1701 University Ave., S.E., Minneapolis, Minn. 55414.

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If you have "news and verbs" to share with the other 1,500 readers of *Report*, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, Neb. 68516.—*Muriel Thiessen Stackley*

## Letters

I have appreciated the input of the Women's Task Force *Report*. I feel that the issues that *Report* deals with are legitimate. As I am from Chicago, my area of concern is here....There are many Mennonites in the Chicago area, but the overwhelming majority live in the suburbs, away from the problems of the inner city. I, too, grew up in a suburb, and received no encouragement in view the inner city as a potential home and area in which to use my talents. I feel that *Report* could be helpful in breaking down urban-subsurban/rural barriers and in educating Mennonite women about the needs and realities of the city. Possible issues could be: 1) The welfare trap. How to understand the effects on a family of four generations of welfare (great-grandma, grandma, mother, and daughter)? How can these women regain a sense of self-worth and independence? How can "work-ethic women" understand how poor women have been forced to degrade themselves, and how they are often helpless to change their situations? Empathy first, and then, What can be done? 2) The

battered woman. How do poverty and its frustrations lead to domestic violence? What can be done? What is being done? How about a case study of a battered women's shelter? 3) The elderly woman. How do the weak, old, and sick become victims in the urban jungle? When a neighborhood is reduced to extreme poverty, and the young and strong have no useful work and no money, the elderly are easy prey. Public housing for the elderly is almost inevitably in poor neighborhoods. Interviews in a housing project may be a good tactic for an article....And the list goes on and on: prostitution, birth control, abortions, child abuse, adult education for women. How can we open communication between middle class white Mennonite women and poor inner-city women of any race? The economic and educational barriers are substantial. A good way to get discussion going is to work together toward some common goal. One way may be a work weekend: find a day care or battered women's shelter or a church that needs painting or cleaning or washing windows—preferably something manual that would be intellectually nonthreatening. Then have a potluck and a bull session. Find out each other's pressing concerns, goals, loves, hates. Share. The goal would be to help both groups find sisterhood outside their own socio-economic group. Perhaps the two groups could establish a continuing dialogue....My assessment of women of Mennonite churches is that they are good and sensitive people who are generally unaware of the gravity of problems that exist in the inner city. I would like to give them a chance to respond; I would like to give them handles on how they can respond.—Ruth A. Kauffman, Chicago, Illinois (12 May 1981).

I find *Report* very enriching. I have shared it with others, especially women in other denominations who look at Mennonite churches and marvel how we are on the cutting edge of our faith and practice. I remind them that it is not as clear cut as they may think, but I do believe in many areas we truly are ahead in looking at

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women in church and society....I appreciate the men who are not afraid to be our advocates and who encourage us to push forward. I am also appreciative of the way in which we have been able to keep a lot of polarization from occurring and I believe *Report* is to be commended as an instrument in this area. Assertion and a firm moving ahead are imperative. Yes, but the lovingkindness and understanding of brother/sisterhood are imperative also. Praise God. God is with us to guide us.—Joyce C. Hedrick, Lansdale, Pennsylvania (31 May 1981).

Dear Friends: I have had the opportunity to read *Report* and I am impressed with the subject matter and resources. I would like to be placed on your mailing list. Although I am not a member of a Mennonite church at present, I grew up in one and was therefore particularly interested in the *Report* concerning depression in Mennonite women (May-June 1980). Depression has been a personal struggle for me and your *Report* reinforced my opinion that much of it has had to do with my religious upbringing. Sometime, somehow, I hope to share my struggles and triumphs with other women who are having similar experiences with the intent of support and help. I also realize that my belief and faith in God and Christ has helped me survive the struggles, but sometimes it seemed that my religion and my faith were working against each other! After reading your report it helped to know that I was not alone in my experience.—Jan Eitzen, Hillsboro, Kansas (9 February 1981).

## Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* with focus on:

Discipleship Motives in Career Choices, September-October 1981, Edith Krause, coordinator.

Singleness and Single Parenting, November-December 1981, Bertha Beachy, coordinator.

Women/Health/Sexuality, January-February 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator.

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